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A STUDY OF MATTHEW ARNOLD.

III. ARNOLD'S CRITICAL METHOD.

I.

IN all Arnold's works, whether in prose or poetry, there is a firm and striking unity of aim, a thorough devotion to a few central ideas around which all others naturally group themselves. In this scheme, or rather in this order, the pure literary criticism has a definite place to fill, an indispensable service to perform. But separate it from this scheme, consider it apart from its bearing upon Arnold's social ideas, and it assumes a most important place in the history of English criticism. What that place is, what Arnold's critical work means in the history of English literature, will best appear from a slight account of English criticism from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the judicial school of criticism reigned supreme in the then recently established Reviews. The methods of this school and of its chief exponents, Jeffrey, Lockhart, and Macaulay, are essentially of a kind with Johnson's. Their range of sympathy is, it is true, wider, their dependence on the ancients not so great; but their dogmatism, intolerance of innovation, and blindness to the deeper significance of literature marked them as belonging to the old school of English criticism which arose with Dryden and of which Johnson was the chief exponent in the eighteenth century.

Long, however, before the school died out with Macaulay, the Romantic critics had arisen, and it is the further growth of English criticism in their hands that bears more directly on Arnold. The work of these critics was to free themselves, often with difficulty, from the ways of the older critics, and to acquire in their place new methods and ideas. They were not only critics in the attitude of cold judgment, but men ardent with new views of life. They threw themselves into the study of foreign literature. The great German poets were

first read, and the long-neglected influence of Italian literature was sought again. And more than this, they were all lovers of Spenser and of the Elizabethan drama.

The first clear note of the new criticism was the preface to the "Lyrical Ballads." Much of the criticism in this preface had no lasting weight, and the chief errors were soon criticised by Coleridge in the "Biographia Literaria." But one passage at least contains a prophecy of the criticism of the nineteenth century. That criticism never lost again a sense of the intimate relation of literature and life. "The poet," says Wordsworth, "binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time." This was the first new element introduced by the romantic critics; hardly ever so well expressed afterwards, but never neglected since.

The next great point of the new critics, the distinction between the fancy and the imagination, first enunciated by Wordsworth in 1815, had no lasting influence. Little was made of it after Coleridge except in an essay by Leigh Hunt. Although Wordsworth first announced the distinction, he had it from Coleridge, who very probably had it from Jean Paul Richter.¹

The chief aim of Coleridge in criticism was to find a psychological basis for poetry, to understand the nature of a poem from the faculty that shaped it—a futile task, perhaps, but eminently characteristic of the new spirit which, utterly disgusted with the shallowness of previous criticism, looked in all things for an ultimate meaning. But Coleridge was also a Shakespearean critic, and he speaks of things heretofore unknown—poetic faith and poetic truth, both distinctions which became permanent possessions to English criticism.

As of Coleridge, so is it true of all first-rate critics that followed, that each brought a more or less definable but new instrument into criticism. Each one prospectively enriched some complete critic to come with a novel point of view.

¹ Vide his "Vorschule der Ästhetik."

So Lamb first truly revealed the riches of the contemporaries of Shakespeare and of the older prose writers, whose style shines through his own at every turn.

Lamb was of the finest and most exquisite temperament. He vibrated to every stroke of passion in the old tragedy. There is a new gusto of delectation in his voice, and the literature which he loves is like old wine on his tongue. He was the most disinterested critic that had yet appeared, and yielded himself up to every source of enjoyment within his range.

Lamb, of course, was an impressionist, but the field of his sympathies was necessarily narrow. He knew, indeed, no modern language except his own, but he showed by his method the tendency of English criticism. The thoroughgoing impressionist was Hazlitt, a man of quite other proportions than Lamb. In Hazlitt the disinterested love of literature vibrates in every line of the splendid and impetuous rush of his eloquent causeries. Criticism, he tells us, should not deal—in truth, the new criticism does not deal—"in sweeping clauses of proscription and anathema, but in nice distinction and liberal construction."² We should not be chained by any convention. Montaigne, for instance, is so great because "he had the power of looking at things for himself, or as they really are."³ Hazlitt also announced the interdependence of matter and form in poetry. The whole character of his criticism is well described by Jeffrey, who reviewed the younger critic's "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays." "The book," says Jeffrey, "is written more to show extraordinary love than extraordinary knowledge."

A greater sense for style, especially for the delicate minor shades, was shown by Leigh Hunt. He was not capable of dealing with the sterner aspects of literature, but was a connoisseur in exquisite felicities of rhythm and diction. But the old failing of indefinite, sometimes quite meaningless, statement is strong in him. It is perhaps not entirely absent from any critic up to this point. No critic to-day would under-

²"On the Periodical Essayists." ³Ibid.

take to tell us, as Leigh Hunt did, that "the reason why verse is necessary to the form of poetry is that the perfection of the poetical spirit demands it."⁴ But Hunt was a furtherer of criticism in his own mild way.

Finally comes a greater man than any of these, Carlyle, who by his literary criticism belongs to this earlier period. A quite disinterested critic of literature Carlyle never was, but he introduced the appreciation of spiritual qualities.⁵ Carlyle introduced a greater sympathy, a finer insight, into the character that produced a book. He gets near to the man whose writings he would criticise. A nobly human attitude dwells in such critical remarks of Carlyle as this: "What is the detecting of a fault, but the feeling of an incongruity, of a contradiction which may exist in ourselves as well as in the object."⁶ It is a far call, in time and in spirit, from the old critics to these memorable words of Carlyle. Every one of these modern critics introduced a new point of view, but this was the crowning touch, the last element needed.

I have said that when the old school of criticism died Coleridge introduced a regard for the ultimate meaning of literature; Lamb, a fine disinterestedness; Hazlitt, a sense for nice distinction and liberal construction; Hunt, a feeling for felicity of style; and Carlyle, an appreciation of spiritual qualities. Now, it is not too much to say that Arnold combines in his critical work all these qualities as no other critic has done. And he did this not unconsciously, but distinctly purposed to attain these qualities in his criticism. This is sufficiently shown by his definition of criticism and his description of the right and fruitful critical attitude. Criticism, says Arnold, is "a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world."⁷ Its "rule may be summed up in one word—disinterestedness."⁸ It should be "sincere, simple, flexible, ardent, ever

⁴Introduction to "Imagination and Fancy."

⁵This phrase is borrowed from Prof. Gates, of Harvard.

⁶Introduction to *German Romance*, Ed. 1827.

⁷Essays in Criticism, I.

⁸Ibid.

widening its knowledge." ⁹ "In poetical criticism the shade, the fine distinction, is everything." ¹⁰ Criticism "must make the best ideas prevail," ¹¹ and so "nourish us in growth toward perfection."¹² Thus Arnold has, in comparison with previous critics, a certain completeness. The excellence which they had half consciously attained, he recognized as excellence, and set himself to arrive at in criticism.

In all this there is nothing new, and Arnold's contribution to English criticism consists mainly, in fact, in the peculiar stress which he laid on disinterestedness in the critic's attitude and on the spiritual qualities of literature. For the best literature was to Arnold, above and beyond all else, a regenerative power for men, a power that would nourish them in growth toward perfection. Hence, as we shall see, he was guided in his choice of subjects by a strict regard for what would help to nourish the Englishmen of his time in growth toward perfection.

In regard to critical method Arnold says: "The great art of criticism is to get one's self out of the way and to let humanity decide."¹³ An excellent example of the way in which Arnold sought to realize this ideal of criticism, more strictly indeed of literature, is found in the essay on "Pagan and Mediæval Religious Sentiment." Here Arnold translates the fifteenth idyll of Theocritus as an example of the pagan spirit, and a hymn of Saint Francis as an example of the Christian spirit. Now, the former of these treats "the world according to the demand of the senses," ¹⁴ the latter "according to the demand of the heart and the imagination."¹⁵ But, though "it is natural that man should take pleasure in his senses," ¹⁶ yet, "when one thinks what human life is to the vast majority of mankind, how little of a feast for the senses it can possibly be, one understands the charm for them of a refuge offered in the heart and imagination."¹⁷ So Arnold, in many cases, by skillfully inserted quotations of kinds of literature opposed to each other, or by descriptions of life

⁹ *Essays in Criticism*, I.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

in widely differing aspects, seeks to obtain results without direct personal interference.

The structure of Arnold's essays, though strictly taken it is a matter of style, has also a bearing on his critical method. Take, for instance, the lectures on Homer. Arnold singles out four chief qualities of Homer. Using these as a touchstone, he shows how each translator failed by failing to reproduce one or more of them. Next, in search of an adequate meter, he inverts the process. One meter will render one of the chosen qualities and fail to render another, so all meters proposed fail at some point until the meter is mentioned which Arnold advocates, and this will render all four qualities. It is noteworthy how Arnold here also attempts to remain in the background, how he exhausts all other possibilities before venturing upon his own view. One other point in Arnold's method is to be noted. He rarely treats the whole of a subject, rather taking some one phase of it, which he exhausts.

Such, in brief, are the chief characteristics of Arnold's critical method. His critical results remain to be spoken of.

The most interesting—perhaps, too, the most representative—portion of any critic's work is that in which he unfolds his general ideas on poetry, not on this or that poet but on poetry. Before going to Arnold's definition of poetry, however, it will be well to glance at the definitions of several preceding critics. Consider this definition of Coleridge:

A poem is that species of composition which is opposed to works of science by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having the object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part.¹⁸

Characteristic of Coleridge is the formally logical perfection of this definition. It does not define poetry, however, for it does not tell us what poetry is, unless by implication that a poem is an organic whole, one part of which necessarily harmonizes with every other, but it tells us what poetry effects. So that even with Coleridge we do not get very far.

¹⁸ *Biographia Literaria*, Ch. 14.

A clearer mind in literary matters was Hazlitt's, and in his introductory lecture to the "Discourses on the English Poets," he exhibits what seems to be an ardent striving after adequate expression. He gives a whole series of interesting definitions of poetry. "Poetry," he says, "is the language of the imagination and the passions;" "Poetry is the imitation of nature;" "Poetry is the high-wrought enthusiasm of fancy and feeling;" "Poetry is the highest eloquence of passion;" "Poetry in its matter and form is natural imagery or feeling combined with passion or fancy"—all very eloquent, as it could not but be from Hazlitt, but all except the second singularly devoid of tangible meaning. We may languidly admit the truth of whatever meaning these eloquent phrases possess, but we are not helped; the core of the matter is as dark as ever.

A definition of far greater value, surprisingly good indeed, is Leigh Hunt's:

Poetry is the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty, and power, embodying and illustrating its conceptions by imagination and fancy and modulating its language on the principle of variety in uniformity.¹⁹

It is perhaps impossible to pick a distinct flaw here, to say this part is untrue or to make a charge of omission, but this definition too has the essential defect of not going to the quick. There is no sudden flood of light, no sign of that sensation as of a veil drawn from truth which should accompany a definition of this sort.

Well known though it be, I will quote Arnold's definition once more: "Poetry is a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty,"²⁰ and "the poet receives his distinctive character from his application under the laws immutably fixed by poetic beauty and poetic truth, of his application, I say, to his subject, whatever it may be, of ideas 'on man, on nature, and on human life.'"²¹

¹⁹ Introduction to "Imagination and Fancy."

²⁰ *Essays in Criticism*, II., p. 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Now, one excellence in which lies the striking contrast between this definition, if it be rightly understood, and all previous ones, can be claimed for it at once, whether we agree with it or not. All other definitions, I must use the word again, leave us languid. "Poetry is the highest eloquence of passion"—perhaps so, but it is not of much concern whether we call it that or not. But if we come to see just what Arnold meant by his definition, we are aroused at once. We agree with it or not, but here is something tangible at last, something that the mind grasps with pleasure. And the best sign of this is, that the definition has been widely discussed, assailed or defended with ardor.

The defects of this definition are twofold: It is incomplete, since Arnold did not tell us what the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty are; and it is obscured by the unfortunate choice of the term "criticism," which actually neither denotes nor connotes Arnold's exact meaning.

Notwithstanding the lack of an explanation on Arnold's part, it is perhaps not difficult to see what he meant by saying that "poetry is a criticism of life." A poet choosing his subject, for instance, in that very act criticises life, for in choosing this subject he affirms it to be noble by deeming it worthy of poetic treatment. He deprecates at the same time all other subjects which he might have chosen as not sufficiently noble and worthy. And if a poet takes as his subject a popular legend, as Vergil did, or stories or histories, as Shakespeare did, then he not only criticises life by his choice of subject but by this treatment of it, by elaborating the nobler and more fitting parts and by rejecting the less noble and fitting.

The second and more obvious sense in which much of the best poetry is a criticism of life is explained by Arnold himself in this passage:

Voltaire with his signal acuteness, most truly remarked that "no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation." . . . Voltaire does not mean . . . the composing moral and didactic poems. . . . He means just the same thing as was meant when I spoke above "of the noble and profound application of ideas

to life." . . . A large sense is of course to be given to the term moral. Whatever bears upon the question "how to live" comes under it.

"Nor love thy life, nor hate; but, what thou livest,
Live well; how long or short permit to heaven."

In those fine lines Milton utters, as every one at once perceives, a moral idea. Yes, but so too, when Keats consoles the forward-bending lover on the Grecian urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line,

"Forever wilt thou love and she be fair,"

he utters a moral idea. When Shakespeare says that

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

he utters a moral idea.²²

Now it seems fairly certain that either in the first or direct way, or in the second or indirect way, poetry is a criticism of life. There is no poet—except a very few moderns like Poe who are by no means universally acknowledged genuine poets—there is no poet, who does not either in the choice and treatment of his subject matter, or by direct remarks "on man, on nature, and on human life," offer us a criticism of life.

Having then a fundamentally fine and sound conception of poetry, it needs to be explained why Arnold on the basis of this conception formed at least two unjust estimates. Certainly he overrated Wordsworth and underrated Shelley. And he overrated Wordsworth, it seems, because he did not always lay sufficient stress upon the second part of his own definition. For, though it is true that the best poetry is a criticism of life, nevertheless no superiority in the breadth and richness of a poet's criticism of life will make up for a less noble and constant conformance to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. That is the reason why, in spite of Arnold, Heine, for instance, is a greater poet than Wordsworth. Wordsworth undeniably offers us in some of his work

²² *Essays in Criticism*, Vol. II., pp. 141-143.

a deeper and more lasting joy than Heine; but in how little of his work does he conform thoroughly to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty! But Heine never departs from these laws at all.

Again, Arnold judged Shelley's works at less than their worth because he did not include enough under his phrase, "criticism of life." In the "Cenci," in "Prometheus Unbound," Shelley certainly offers a criticism of life, and in regard to more intensely personal productions it may be urged that poetry is a criticism of life not only when it deals with the common life of men, but also when it deals with the experience of the poet's individual life.

But Arnold has other sayings on poetry, no less interesting and important than his famous definition: "Poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things;" ²³ "The grand power of poetry is its interpretative power; by which I mean not a power of drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them and of our relations with them;" ²⁴ "The substance and matter of the best poetry acquire their special character from possessing in an eminent degree truth and seriousness. To the style and manner of the best poetry their special character, the accent, is given by their diction, and even yet more by their movement." ²⁵

It is impressive to put these sayings together. They give a sense of massive critical power. And to these, Arnold's sayings on style may be added: "Style, in my sense of the word, is a peculiar recasting and heightening, under a certain condition of spiritual excitement, of what a man has to say, in such a manner as to add dignity and distinction to it." ²⁶ And, "the grand style (another famous phrase) arises

²³ *Essays in Criticism*, I., p. 161.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, II., pp. 21, 22.

²⁶ *Celtic Literature*, p. 105.

in poetry, when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject.”²⁷

When we turn from detached passages to Arnold’s lectures and essays as wholes, we find in the earliest, the lectures on Homer, all his future ideas in the germ. Fully developed they were perhaps even then in his own mind, but not fully expressed. And these lectures on Homer, too, constitute nearly all the purely literary criticism which Arnold wrote until the last decade of his life, for the first series of the “*Essays in Criticism*” is evidently the first book bearing upon Arnold’s fuller views of life.

The purpose of this volume and of nearly all succeeding volumes is announced in the first essay, “*The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*,” and that purpose is “to pull out a few more stops in that powerful but at present somewhat narrow-toned organ, the modern Englishman.”²⁸ And the function of criticism is to pull out these stops by denouncing vulgar self-satisfaction and by pointing out all that “will nourish us in growth toward perfection.”²⁹

Looking at the *Essays* from this point of view, the purpose of each becomes clear. Besides this we must consider, however, that it was Arnold’s temperament which to a great extent guided him in the choice of that which in his opinion would contribute to the perfecting of men. “*The Literary Influence of Academies*” is a warning against eccentricity and provinciality in style and scholarship. Maurice de Guérin’s works are illustrative of the “magical power of poetry,” “the interpretative power” gained in the medium of French prose. Eugénie de Guérin is an example of spiritual distinction contrasted with the lack of that quality in England. Heine is the indomitable Hellenist, whose example may at this time be salutary for England. He is a soldier in the liberation war of humanity. “*Pagan and Mediæval Religious Sentiment*” offers the contrast between Hellenism and Hebraism. “*A Persian Passion Play*,” written long after these *Essays*, but

²⁷ On Translating Homer, p. 26.

²⁸ *Essays in Criticism*, I.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

most fittingly added to the first series, shows the universality of certain religious emotions. Joubert is an instance of a man possessing the passion for perfection in its completeness. Spinoza represents a new way of dealing with the Bible, and is moreover "a man in the grand style." "The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," finally, exemplify morality touched with emotion, which in Arnold's view is true religion.

Now, although this volume contains one estimate which is perhaps wrong, and although it may be questioned whether the essays on the Guérins, with all their grace of matter and manner, are not wasted on rather insignificant subjects, it is yet one of the truest achievements of modern English literature. After the excessive insularity of previous critics of literature or life, after the genuine but at length irritating seerdom of Carlyle, here is a man who unites with a piercing insight a most noble impartiality. He is above all considerations, individual or national, as free from crochets as any one can well hope to be, bent only on seeing things as they really are.

Arnold's next volume brought the lectures on "Celtic Literature." As already said, they are unsatisfactory. A pretense at scientific method carried out with a smattering of knowledge at second hand is not easily pardonable. Fine poise, exquisite spiritual delicacy, will do much, how much we may see in Arnold's other works, but they cannot estimate racial characteristics in literature. When Arnold tells us that this quality of English literature is of Celtic origin, that of Norman, however carried away we may be by the persuasiveness of his manner, the point comes at which we ask: "Where is your evidence? Are passages from Ossian the ground of your conclusion?" No, work of this kind demands arduous labor, unflinching attention to attested facts, and Arnold brought neither to it.

But there are pleasant oases in this comparative desert, for the sake of which one will bear much. Most remarkable are a discussion of style in literature in which Arnold, perhaps the first critic to see it, suggests the absence of style in

German poetry, and the well-known passage on natural magic.

Between the publication of this volume and that of the second series of the "Essays in Criticism" Arnold wrote only two notable essays on literature: "A French Critic on Milton" and "A French Critic on Goethe." There is little of Arnold's own in the first of these essays. He contents himself with agreeing with Sherer, that Milton is great in spite of his matter and because of his style. But in the second essay is Arnold's final dictum on Goethe, a genuine critical achievement. "He is," says Arnold, "the clearest, the largest, the most helpful thinker of modern times. . . . The greatest poet of modern times . . . because, having a very considerable gift for poetry, he was at the same time, in the width, depth, and richness of his criticism of life, by far our greatest modern man."

It is unnecessary to speak at length of the second series of the "Essays in Criticism." The estimates of Wordsworth and of Shelley, I have sought to explain. The estimate of Byron is susceptible of the same explanation as the overestimate of Wordsworth. In the essay on Keats Arnold returns to the magical power of poetry, of which Keats was the chief exponent. "The Study of Poetry," which opens this volume, warns against historical and personal estimates of poetry and urges the adoption of the real estimate, pointing out the method by which one may arrive at this estimate.

In all these essays I have dwelt upon the main features only, hardly upon the perfection of phrase, the fine adequacy of every characterization. But this, and much smaller touches that appear only after the most careful attention, has in Arnold more generally a great deal to do with final effects than in most writers.

What convinces one more and more of the value of all these essays, of their perfectness of literary quality, is, that when all criticism is made, all untrue estimates apprehended, one returns to them with increasing zest. As is possible in the best literature alone, one anticipates favorite passages, after long acquaintance, with a deep and lasting pleasure. If the dicta

of these essays are not always true, they are always stimulating, and they arouse in us, when jaded by the best criticisms of other men, a renewed interest in the subjects they treat of, a more perfect appreciation of what is best in literature and life.

II.

"The treatment of politics with one's thoughts, or with one's imagination, or with one's soul, in place of the common treatment of them with one's philistinism and with one's passions, is the only thing which can reconcile, it seems to me, any serious person to politics." These memorable words occur in a letter of Arnold's dated 1854. They are memorable because Arnold does not formulate so distinctly or concisely the gist of his leading ideas in any of his published works as in these chance phrases. Substitute life for politics, and the very core of Arnold's teaching stands complete. It is well, perhaps, to begin with the negative part of this saying. Life should not be treated with one's philistinism and with one's passions.

Life should not be treated with one's philistinism. But what is philistinism? Arnold answers: "On the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of morals and feeling, coarseness; on the side of mind and spirit, unintelligence—this is philistinism." This philistinism is represented by the Puritan middle classes, whose religion, for instance, "is the very lowest form of intelligential life which one can imagine," and who, above all, "have not enough added to their care for walking staunchly by the best light they have, a care that that light be not darkness." And these people have excluded from their lives all spiritual influences but that of religion. Four charges then, it seems to me, Arnold brings against the Puritan middle classes—that is to say, against the great bulk of the English and American people as Arnold saw them. The charges are, that the middle class has narrowed itself by concentration upon a crude religion; it is inaccessible to ideas; it fixes its faith upon material well-being; it has no care that its light be not darkness.

Arnold, then, is an apostle of the spirit, opposed to mate-

rial advantages unless they advance the life of the spirit, and in his last charge, in his urging to abandon stock notions, and to see things as they really are, he fights against the conventional, the mechanical,

das ewig Gestrige
Was immer war und immer wiederkehrt
Und Morgen gilt, weil's Heute hat gegolten.³⁰

Here he is at one with Carlyle. Carlyle's "dead dogs" are Arnold's stock notions. Carlyle's "gigmanity" is Arnold's philistinism. Both are apostles of the spirit applied to the conduct of life, destroying convention and striving to see things as they really are.

This thought, the central thought of Arnold's system, runs like a continuous stream even through his poetry.

The aids to noble life are all within.

In "Empedocles" he says:

Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done thy fears;
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.

Sink in thyself; there ask what ails thee, at that shrine.

And in another passage he sums up his whole teaching:

Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high
Upon our life a ruling effluence send.
And when it fails, fight as we will, we die,
And while it lasts we cannot wholly end.³¹

And the power by which this inner life is developed, formed, drawn out, is culture. "Culture is above all an inward operation," and "places human perfection in an internal condition." Its ideal of human perfection is "an inward spiritual activity, having for its characters increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy." "Culture is a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been said and thought in the world."

Arnold's idea of what true progress is shows why culture,

³⁰ Wallenstein's Tod., Act I., Sc. 4.

³¹ Poems, p. 251.

why an inward operation, is a panacea for the evils of society. "Human progress consists in the gradual increase in the number of those who, ceasing to live by the animal life alone, come to participate in the intellectual life also, and to find enjoyment in the things of the mind." This, then, being Arnold's idea of progress, his system stands complete. This progress is to be reached through culture; the instruments of culture are literature, art, philosophy; the critic is to point out the best in literature and art, that which is most conducive to culture, that which will exert the deepest formative influence on the human spirit.

Once more then: the fundamental thoughts which stand out in Arnold's works against a background of illustration and instances are these: "Progress consists in intellectualizing the masses in order that the conduct of life be carried on by intellect, not passion. Such progress must be reached through culture."

When men struggle for an idea, and when they see that idea approximately realized, it is not unnatural that they should rest satisfied, that they should cease looking beyond. In the latter days of the eighteenth century and in the early days of the nineteenth men fought for the democratic idea. The democratic idea is realized in England and America, and the masses rest satisfied. Given political liberty, they strive only for material well-being. Not only that, but they are apt to look with distrust upon any one who is not content with liberty and wealth. They are satisfied, satisfied in their achievements, in their well-being. So the *Times* reproached Arnold as one "whose dainty taste requires something more flimsy than the strong sense and sturdy morality of his fellow-Englishmen." The spirit is not unfrequent in America. Some of our more provincial newspapers are not unapt to adopt a similar tone toward anything beyond their sphere of ideas. As Arnold also saw, we think too much of the average man.

This self-satisfaction Arnold denounced in prose and poetry, and showed how men should rise above it.

Little in your prosperity
Do you seek counsel of the gods.
Proud, ignorant, self-adored, you live alone.

"We should try, so far as we can, to make up our shortcomings, and that to this end, instead of always fixing our thoughts upon the points in which our literature and our intellectual life generally are strong, we should from time to time fix them upon those in which they are weak, and so learn to perceive clearly what we have to amend." So it may also be said that Arnold taught us not to live without a never-failing consciousness of the ideal and of how far we fall short of it. Such consciousness is the passion for perfection, and culture is, as we have seen, a pursuit of our total perfection. And this applies not only to individuals but to nations, which "are not truly great solely because the individuals composing them are numerous, free, and active; but they are great when these numbers, this freedom, and this activity are employed in the service of an ideal higher than that of an ordinary man."

From whatever point, however, we regard Arnold's ideas (for he would have resented calling them doctrines), we must always return to the phrase, apostle of the spirit, and it may be added, of the whole spirit, not of any particular manifestation. The human spirit is made up of many powers: the power for conduct and the power for beauty, the power for intellect and knowledge, the power for social life and manners, and perfection means not perfection of any one of these but of all, harmonious perfection.

With all these ideas of Arnold's before us, it is easy to understand how he was an advocate of compulsory education,³² and how he bore for many years, almost without complaint, the drudgery of a school inspectorship, how nobly and laboriously he performed the work of bettering instruction in the English schools. And in education he was, of course, a defender of literature and the classics as opposed to the exclusive study of physical science. He made such a defense the subject of one of the discourses in America, "Literature

³² Friendship's Garland, p. 266-273.

and Science," one of his finest examples of alternate unobtrusive but irrefragible argument and quietly stinging irony.

Besides "Culture and Anarchy" and "Friendship's Garland," the complimentary books in which Arnold set forth his social or political ideas, Arnold wrote a number of other books: "Saint Paul and Protestantism," "Literature and Dogma," and "God and the Bible"—laborious books, the main purpose of which was a helpful interpretation of the Bible in the light of modern criticism. Convinced of the truth of Strauss's, Baur's, and Renan's criticism of the Bible, he asked how may it yet retain its power, how may it be changed from a talisman to a teacher of righteousness?

We have seen that the chief quality of Arnold's poetry is restraint, that the chief quality of his Attic prose is restraint; also that he was most vitally influenced by those modern writers who realized in their best works the ideals of the ancients, restraint, calmness, perfection of form, and reasonableness. These are the traits of Arnold the artist.

Arnold the reformer preached culture, the cultivation of the intellect, the suppression of passion and prejudice. He preached reason and justice, which "have in them something persuasive and irresistible."

Consider these two aspects, and it becomes clear that just as such a man as Carlyle is primarily a moral force, so Arnold is primarily an intellectual force. Intellectual forces in literature are rarer than æsthetic or moral forces. To Arnold belongs the distinction of being the finest chiefly intellectual force in English literature.

He realized, moreover, his own ideal of a remarkable thinker, whose office it is "to throw into circulation a certain number of new and striking ideas and expressions, and to stimulate with them the thought and imagination of his century or of aftertimes." More than this, the ideas which Arnold threw out are in accordance with the spirit and the truth which must prevail in the modern world.

He is a poet of the finest and most lasting quality, a modern thinker of unusual significance, and the most charming and helpful of English critics.

LUDWIG LEWISOHN.